



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Number 1, November 2009



Coral garden in Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge's lagoon / Greg Sanders, USFWS

Help Us Plan for the Future!

Over the next month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will be seeking input from the public, interested agencies, and organizations regarding their interests, concerns, and viewpoints about important refuge management issues. This information will be helpful in the production of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, which will be incorporated into a Rose Atoll Marine National Monument Management Plan.

This is the first in a series of planning updates to keep you informed and invite your

participation in the planning process for the Refuge. As we begin this planning process, we are provided the opportunity to look at our habitat management and public programs from fresh perspectives.

Currently, the Refuge is closed to the public to protect nesting seabirds and rare marine life that reside at the atoll. The purpose of the Refuge will remain the same as when the area was set aside "for the conservation, management and protection of its unique and valuable fish and wildlife resources."

However, we have an opportunity to consider whether public programs such as environmental education and wildlife observation may be possible and to review our management of habitats such as coral reefs, sand islands, and Pisonia forest. Your insights and observations are needed to provide a more complete and thoughtful process.

Please share your ideas with us by attending upcoming public meetings (see page 6 for details) or by submitting written comments to the refuge (see page 6 for contact information).

Public Open House Meeting

A Public Open House Meeting will be held November 19, 2009, in Pago Pago
(see page 6 for details).

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort – we want to hear from you!

National Wildlife What?

Refuges are places where wildlife comes first. The National Wildlife Refuge System comprises the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife and provides important habitat for native plants and animals. The National Wildlife Refuge System is administered by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the benefit of the American people.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is:

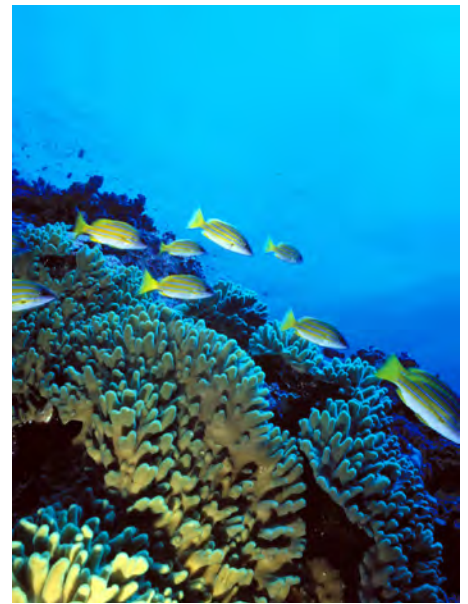
"To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

Refuge Overview

Rose Atoll is located approximately 130 nautical miles east-southeast of Pago Pago Harbor, American Samoa, and is the easternmost Samoan island and is one of two atolls in the Samoan Archipelago. It is the southernmost unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and shares the distinction with Jarvis Island of being the only

National Wildlife Refuge located south of the equator.

Rose Atoll is nearly square, with the ocean-side slopes about 1 mile in length. It is one of the smallest atolls in the world, consisting of two low sandy islets, Rose and Sand. Each is located on a coralline algal reef rim enclosing a lagoon.



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A single, narrow, shallow channel with a minimum depth of 8 feet links the lagoon to the sea. The lagoon is a maximum of 1.2 miles wide and up to about 65 feet deep, and includes 1,575 acres. Rose and Sand Islands cover areas of about 14 and 7 acres respectively, and rise a mere 8 feet above sea level.

Rose Atoll is part of the Territory of American Samoa and was established as a National Wildlife Refuge by cooperative agreement between the Government of American Samoa and FWS on August 24, 1973.

Despite its small size, Rose Atoll supports the largest populations of giant clams, nesting sea turtles, nesting seabirds, and rare species of reef fish in American Samoa. To date, about 270 species of fish have been recorded at the atoll. The two islands are important nesting sites for the threatened green turtle in American Samoa. Satellite tags attached to the nesting green turtles at Rose have shown that these turtles migrate between American Samoa and other Pacific island nations (i.e., Fiji and French Polynesia). In



Rose Atoll / Greg Sanders, USFWS

addition to the migratory breeding population of turtles at the atoll during the nesting season (August to February), a small resident population of juveniles apparently lives on the atoll. Endangered hawksbill turtles have also been seen in the lagoon, although it is not known if they nest on the islands.

Rose Atoll is the most important seabird colony in the region, since approximately 97 percent of the seabird population of American Samoa resides on Rose. The two islands provide important nesting and roosting habitat for

12 species of federally protected migratory seabirds including terns, noddies, boobies, frigatebirds, and tropicbirds. Only 1 year after removal of rats in 1993, two species of shearwaters (wedge-tailed and Christmas Island) were sighted on Rose Island, the first such burrowing seabirds recorded on Rose.

The Refuge has been closed to public uses since its establishment to protect the natural resources of this small atoll. In 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service prohibited vessels longer

than 50 feet from fishing within 50 nautical miles of Rose Atoll. In 2004, the National Marine Fisheries Service established a no fishing zone that extends outside of the atoll to a depth of 50 fathoms (300 feet). In recent years, most management attention at Rose Atoll by FWS has been focused on removing the 120-foot Taiwanese longline fishing vessel F/V Jin Shiang Fa, which ran aground on the southwest perimeter reef at Rose Atoll in October 1993. The last remaining debris was removed from the atoll in 2007, and FWS continues to monitor reef recovery.

Rose Atoll Marine National Monument

On January 6, 2009, President George W. Bush established the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument (MNM) by signing Presidential Proclamation 8337 under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906. The lands, submerged lands, waters, and marine environment of Rose Atoll

support a dynamic reef ecosystem that is home to a very diverse assemblage of terrestrial and marine species, many of which are threatened or endangered. One of the most striking features is the pink hue of fringing reef caused by the dominance of coralline algae.

Presidential Proclamation 8337 assigned management responsibility for the Rose Atoll MNM to the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce. Through Secretary's Order January 16, 2009, the Secretary of the Interior delegated management responsibility for the Monument to the FWS Director.

The Secretary of Commerce, through NOAA, has primary management responsibility for fishery-related activities regarding the management of the marine areas of the Monument seaward of mean low water. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service will be developing regulations for fishery-related activities. Agencies with jurisdiction or special expertise, including the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Government of American Samoa, are to be treated as cooperating agencies in development of any Rose Atoll MNM management plans.



Juvenile red-footed boobies on Rose Island / Jim Maragos, USFWS

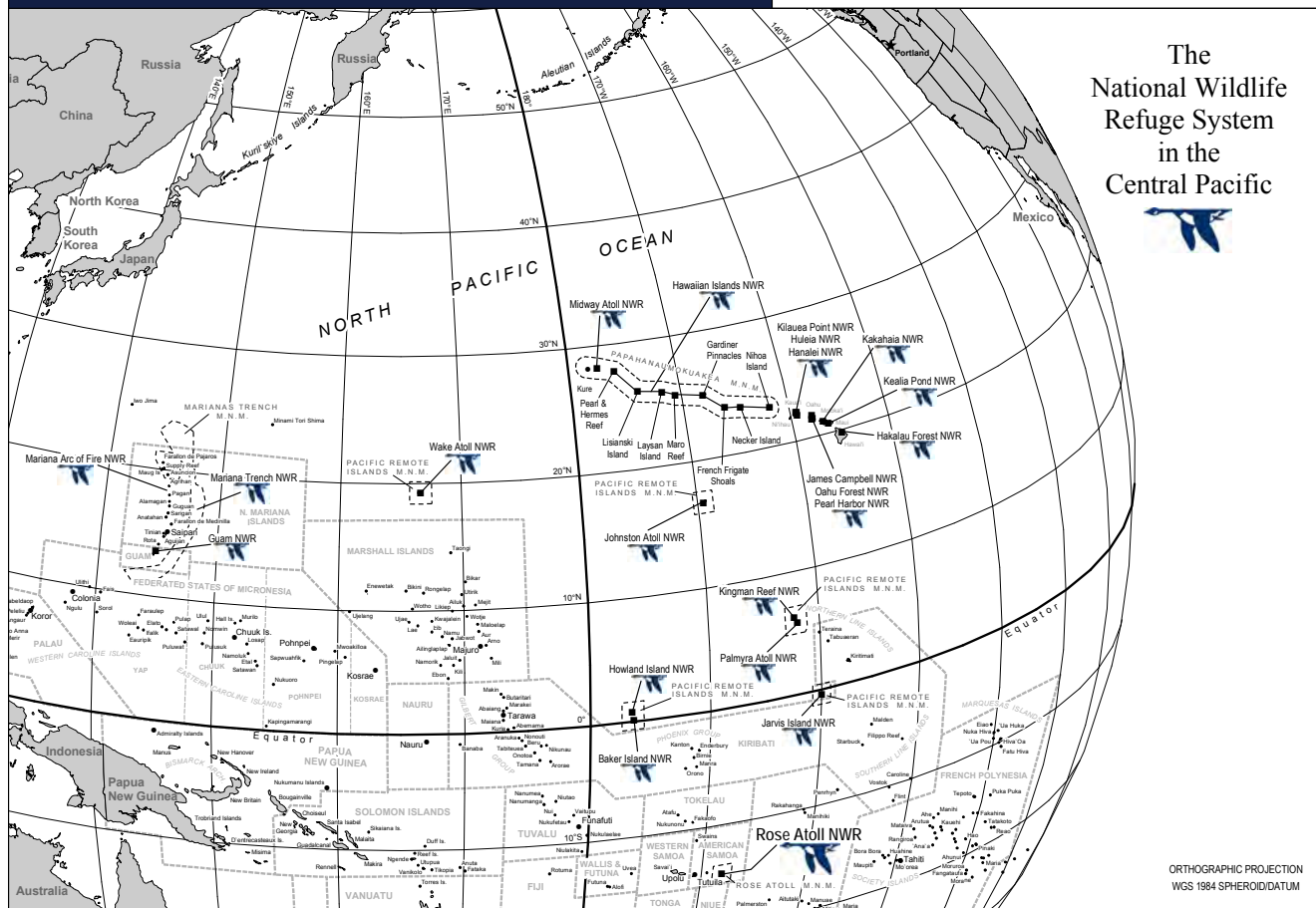
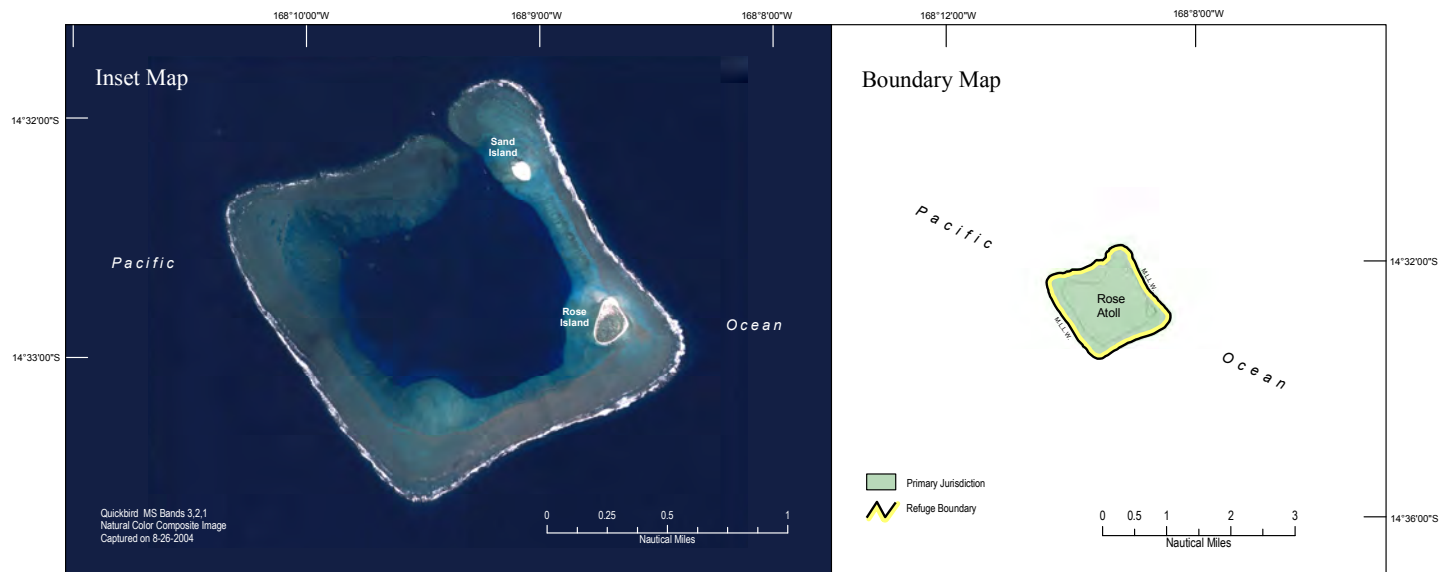


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

Territory of American Samoa

Land Status



Produced for the Division of Realty & Refuge Information
Portland, Oregon
Current to: 11-14-06
Basemap (Date): 09-30-09
Mendian/n/a
File: 05-219-4.mxd

Scale: 1:30,000,000

0 250 500 1,000 1,500
Miles (approximate)

0 250 500 1,000 1,500
Kilometers (approximate)



UTM ZONE 28
WGS 84

Preliminary Issues to be Considered

In preparing the CCP, a range of possible alternative management approaches will be explored and evaluated, including current management practices. The effects of the various alternatives on the biological resources and local communities will be evaluated in an Environmental Assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The planning team has identified some potential issues to be considered during CCP development. We want to hear your comments on these issues, and any other topics of concern, at our public meetings (see page 6). If you aren't able to attend one of our public meetings, please submit your comments in writing to the Refuge (see page 6 for contact information), by December 31, 2009.

Wildlife and Habitat Resources

- Terrestrial habitat protection and restoration (for the Pisonia

forest, sea turtle nesting, seabird nesting, shorebirds)

- Marine habitat protection and restoration (for coral reefs, giant clams, marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, and fishes)

Visitor Services Activities

- Wildlife observation and photography
- Environmental education
- Public visitation via sail or motorized boat

Protection of Natural, Historic, and Cultural Resources

- Threats to the islands and reefs (unauthorized trespass, illegal fishing, marine debris, shipwrecks, and invasive species)
- Public awareness and understanding

Other topics

- Scientific exploration and research
- Monitoring and enforcement
- Permitting



Tridacna Maxima / Jim Maragos, USFWS



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Tentative Planning Schedule

Schedule dates are tentative and subject to change as the planning process progresses.

Planning Step

Planning Update 1 issued
Public Meetings
Planning Update 2 issued
Planning Update 3 issued
Public Review/Comment
on Draft CCP/EA
Final CCP

Target Date

November 2009
November 2009
February 2010
August 2010

September 2010
January 2011



Rose Atoll National Wildlife Refuge
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Rm 5-231
Box 50167
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Address Correction Requested

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You are invited to the first Open House Public Scoping Meetings

Meetings will be held in the Manu'a islands during November. They will be advertised locally. One meeting will be held on the island of Tutuila at the Utulei Convention Center on Thursday, November 19 from 4 to 6 p.m.

We hope to see you there!

How Do I Contact the Service or Provide Comments?

For more information on the National Wildlife Refuge or to provide your comments:

Don Palawski, Project Leader
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300 Ala Moana Blvd., Box 50167
Honolulu, HI 96850
Phone: (808) 792-9550
Fax: (808) 792-9586
E-mail: ramnm@fws.gov
Web: <http://www.fws.gov/roseatoll/>



Octopus cyanea on Rose Atoll / Greg Sanders, USFWS